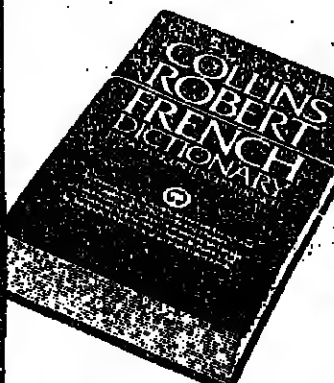


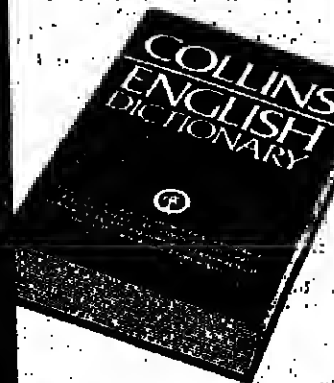
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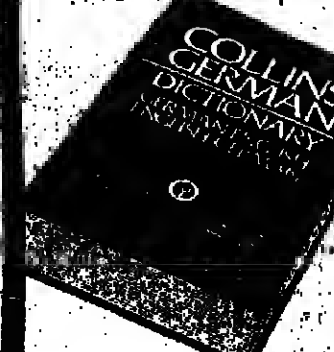
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Rascals of the retinue

By Denis Mack Smith



Fascists in fresco. On horseback is Benito Mussolini; immediately to the right of his horse's head are Emilio de Bono and Italo Balbo. To their right: Guglielmo Marconi, Lawrence Wilson (a Canadian philanthropist) and the Duca degli Abruzzi; behind the horse, a statue of Michele Bianchi and Cesare de Vecchi. The fresco itself is painted on the ceiling of the opus of the church of Notre Dame de la Défense in Montreal, the church of that city's Italian community. The artist was Guido Nincheri and the fresco was inaugurated in 1933.

It is a political leader can be judged by the subordinates he appoints. Mussolini must rank poorly because he chose people he distrusted and despised: "they are all rotten to the core", he once said. Most of his ministers were of far less than average competence, and some were nothing less than criminals. So sure was he of his own abilities, so confident of the stupidity and dishonesty of all mankind, that he surrounded himself with sycophants, dissemblers and place-hunters. He had a positive gift for putting people in the wrong jobs and for disregarding all who were honest or who told him the truth; flatterers were preferred to persons of character or culture, and few of those who were brave enough to disagree with him survived long in office. He even used to say that when choosing a minister he would prefer a rascal to an honest man, and one of his better ministers called this admission the main key to understanding his personality.

Italian leaders have never had much of a taste for history, and this makes it the more interesting that these readable and scholarly books have recently appeared on the lives of three of Mussolini's more intelligent and important collaborators. Italo Balbo, Galeazzo Ciano, and Giuseppe Volpi, all started from relatively humble origins. None of them was a "facile" of the first hour, but all quickly saw that their future lay with the fascist revolution. Balbo at Ferrara, Ciano at Livorno, Volpi at Venice, each constructed a loyal base where he was virtually unchallengeable, and each was anxious to go further and play a part in government. All three succeeded, becoming rich and powerful in the process, though all lived long enough to realize that Mussolini, far from being the saviour they had hoped for, was leading Italy to disaster.

Balbo was one of the few people apart from Mussolini himself who played an indispensable part in the fascist victory of 1922. His home town, Ferrara, saw the first fascist triumph, and here it was that Balbo at the age of only twenty-five showed what could be done by the fascist on a grand scale. As an organizer of the fascist armed squads, his brutalities were the admiration of Mussolini and other fascists who were more squeamish and less imaginative.

Cynical, brave, a born leader and a ruthless hatchet-man, Balbo led his columns of organized terrorists through central Italy, leaving a trail of smoke and destruction and death behind them. Implicated too closely in the murder of a priest, he eventually in 1924 had to resign his position as commander of the fascist militia, but by then he had used his position to become a person of considerable wealth and had good reason to know that a criminal record, far from being a handicap, was a helpful qualification for promotion to yet higher and more lucrative offices.

Balbo's main ministerial position was after 1926 at the Air Ministry, where, by concentrating very successfully on world speed records, he managed to convince people that the Italian air force was the most powerful in the world. This was a pure illusion, but it had excellent results as a military deterrent. Balbo and Mussolini into thinking that the British Mediterranean fleet could be sunk overnight whenever they chose, on the basis of which, of course, he called Ciano the most

pompous ass he had ever met; Hitler referred to him as "that disgusting boy"; others have described him as a playboy, a boaster, a vulgarizer who used to throw pellets of bread at official dinners, and who was shown by the photographers picking his nose as the Fascist of Steel was signed in Berlin. Yet he had more intelligence and culture than most of the other top fascists. He also had a sticky charm that, together with his reputation of being the Duce's favourite, gave him some social success, and Guerri assures us, somewhat improbably, that whereas Mussolini had only 169 lovers in his whole lifetime, Ciano had more in just seven years as a minister.

The appointment of such a person as foreign minister at the age of thirty-three came as something of a shock to the staid world of diplomacy, for he had few obvious qualifications except the all-important one of being Mussolini's son-in-law. Entirely obsequious to the Duce, except behind his back, he worked dutifully to secure an alliance with Nazi Germany; he, too, said that war was inevitable against France and Britain, and it would be a war that could be won without much difficulty, following his father-in-law he also asserted that the master race of the future would be Italians, Germans and Japanese, once the western democracies had been hopelessly corrupted by pacifism and by the Jews. The main difference between them was that Mussolini perhaps believed this kind of thing, while Ciano was a grimmer with both eyes on the main chance.

Italian intervention in the Spanish Civil War was one of Ciano's personal enthusiasms and it was therefore not by the army but from his own private office. In retrospect this intervention can be seen as a huge miscalculation, because though the fascists ultimately won, they had expected it would last two weeks, not two-and-a-half years, and the cost was eventually quite crippling for Italy; as Mussolini said himself it bled Italy white and it proved to be what has been called his greatest mistake of all. Ciano moreover had a good deal of the responsibility for defying General Franco's wish and using terrorist tactics in the bombing of civilian populations. The wicked killing of prisoners, the cold-blooded assassination of the Rosselli brothers, these seem to have been by his order. A reluctant navy was also directed to send forty submarines to sink neutral shipping and the order was that they should never surface to save any survivors. Such distressing facts were of course kept secret, but enough leaked out to start the process by

which Italians turned against a regime so lacking in intelligence and morality. One interest for a biographer is that, though Ciano was not entirely lacking in good nature, the corruption of absolute power deprived him of moderation, humility and ordinary common-sense.

When Italy invaded Albania in 1939 and Greece in 1940, these were very much Ciano's wars and he did not scruple to invent facts so as to encourage a not unwilling Mussolini into both of them. Ciano's treacherous attempts to assassinate King Zog of Albania and King George of Greece were typical of the man. So was his fatal assumption that he had successfully bribed the Greek Generals to surrender after only a token resistance; the many millions spent on bribes were no doubt used by the recipients for the very opposite of what was intended, but Mussolini was calculating on having bought himself a victory. Several weeks after the invasion of Greece the fascist army was thrown back ignominiously into Albania, and a war that Ciano had said would last days ended by tying down half a million soldiers uselessly for three years. Another mistake had been made. If only the immense effort put into this debilitating and senseless side-war had been concentrated in North Africa, the British Eighth Army would have had a harder time of it.

Ciano as foreign minister was a dilettante and often it is hard to take him seriously. At a time when Italy was preparing for a major war, he hardly bothered to keep in touch with the Italian ambassadors in London, Berlin and Moscow; and his ambassador in France received only two telegrams in a whole year, one of which instructed him to find a governess for the minister's children. Ciano's excuse was that Mussolini was a genius who was bound to win without any need for the palace of diplomatic contacts; so great a genius that Ciano always preferred to remain standing in his presence, even when the Duce telephoned, Ciano as he took the call would stand to attention and make the Roman salute with an outstretched arm. Yet in private he told others that he thought Mussolini might be going mad. The chief of police testified that several times Ciano asked him to get from Himmler or a traitorous poison which he intended to kill Mussolini and take power himself; Guerri does not believe this story and says there is no confirmation of it (though on this last point (in what is a full and accurate book) he is wrong).

In January, 1944, Mussolini had

Ciano executed, and this was the latter's finest moment as it was one of Mussolini's worst. The victim showed great courage as he faced a phony trial, in which he was not allowed even to produce witnesses in his defence, and was brave enough to laugh in court at the patent absurdity of the proceedings. Several days were spent trying to persuade one lawyer after another to appear in his defence, but they all with one accord made their excuses, and subsequently Ciano's appeal for clemency was turned down without serious consideration, certainly by Mussolini's wish. In a final grotesque scene, one of the guards planted by the SS smuggled poison to him in prison, but it turned out to be innocuous when he took it; then, the firing-squad botched half-jobs and he had to be finished off with a pistol. Mussolini expressed contrition, but his daughter, Edda Ciano, never forgave him for the vindictiveness and cowardice he showed in this judicial murder.

Sergio Romano, who is a distinguished Italian diplomat, has a more graceful task with Giuseppe Volpi, "the lost Duke of Venice". A more attractive paragon, as flamboyant and picturesque as both the others and in his own way as powerful, Volpi used his power more wisely and was far better at his job than either. He was a much older man, already a merchant prince before 1914, and he outlived the grim days of fascism. Volpi's first fortune was made in the old Ottoman empire, projecting a tobacco monopoly in Montenegro; his achievements, and skills were recognized when he was chosen to lead the Italian negotiators in arranging the treaty of Ouchy with the Turks in 1912. Later he was an Italian delegate to the peace discussions at Paris in 1919. By then he was on the board of fifty different companies, many of them as chairman or managing director. A huge financial empire was based on banking, insurance, and making electricity for most of eastern Italy; he also provided water to Rome, Naples, Palermo, and Turin; later he controlled the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons Lits and, indirectly, Thomas Cook and Son in London as well as an electricity company in Lincolnshire and part of the banking empire that he today in the news with the *craze* of the mysterious "Michele" Sindona. Although certainly he was the richest man in Italy.

Volpi's political involvement became more serious when after appointment as Governor of Tripoli, he joined the fascist party; this was in 1923, though to make it look better, he used his authority as Governor to block-date his membership card to a year earlier. In Tripoli he became a hero to Italians by initiating a policy of conquest after unilaterally denouncing a treaty with the Senussi that had allowed parliamentary government to the Arab population. One of the best agricultural lands was arbitrarily taken for distribution to Italian settlers—to himself among others. His paternalist poconcul rule left a bad memory among the Arabs, though the exceptions at Lepcis and Sabratha remain as evidence of some of his more constructive activity.

Back in Italy in 1925 he was appointed Minister of Finance, in which position he was forced by Mussolini to effect a major revaluation of the lire on the grounds that it was necessary to secure the prestige of the Italian currency. Volpi himself would have preferred something much less severe and on this point was almost certainly correct, but he gave way and his "stabilization of the lire" was for some years a major burden on the Italian economy. His gifts were shown to better effect when he persuaded Britain and the United States to scale down Italy's debts by more than half; by so doing he made possible a substantial investment in Italy by overseas banks and his own private affairs became more prosperous than ever. According to the British ambassador at the time, everyone assumed that he used his position to enrich himself and his friends by not always respectable means, but the gossip was no doubt exaggerated. Volpi's most ambitious and perhaps most dubious enterprise was

his attempt to make Venice into an industrial city by linking it with new industrial zones on the mainland, as Margherita and Mussolini had always been the centre of his own economic empire, and he had to act with inconsiderate haste because, after Italy's annexation of Trieste in 1919, there was a danger that this rival city might get too much of the limited amounts of government money available. He therefore used his new political connections to get subsidies and fiscal exemptions for an immense programme of economic development; and his own interests in banking and electricity did immensely well out of it. He cannot be blamed for failing to see all the results of this development: but pollution of the city and of the lagoon was soon a major problem, and there was a further exodus of people to seek work on the mainland. Fast quantities of water had to be taken from the suburbs to feed scores of new factories, with the result that the island city began to sink, and flooding at high tide became a terrible danger with which Venice is still trying, not very successfully, to cope. It is true that Volpi gave new life to the Venetian film and music industry, and that film festivals that have flourished to this day, but his legacy to the city

he loved so much was on balance unfortunate.

The fascists gave in to him over Venice, but in return demanded his loyalty and help. Repeatedly, Volpi expressed in public his personal devotion to Mussolini and hailed him as the saviour of Italy, capably after returning to a more active political life when he became president of the Fascist Confederation of Industrialists in 1934. Since the interests of the business community had always depended on a close relation with government, and on protective duties, credits and tax incentives that could be provided only in Rome, and since this became an entirely controlled economy, he would have liked to return to a post in the cabinet; but the job he was given was that of developing the economy of the Italian empire in East Africa. Mussolini had negotiated the economy of the state by heavy industries in Ethiopia to equip a black army that would dominate the continent. Volpi, on the contrary, had no intention of creating a rival economy that might compete with Italian exports in international markets, and effectively dragged his feet. Many scoundrel fortunes were made by entrepreneurs in Ethiopia, who

exploited Mussolini's naivety and readiness to waste vast amounts of taxpayers' money, but it seems Volpi was not one of them.

For eight years he was on the Grand Council of Fascism, and so shared direct responsibility for a number of decisions he cannot have liked, including the racial laws against the Jews and a ruthless policy of extermination in Ethiopia. But he became enthusiastic over the prospect of an Italian victory in World War Two that would extend Italian economic influence through Africa and the Middle East. During that war, as the spokesman of Italian industrialists, he led Mussolini to the dangerous falsehood that Italian war industries were better equipped than those of Britain or the United States and could easily hold out for six years if necessary. In 1941-42 he was asked to plan a trans-African railway and to bring back to Italy only in 1947 a few months before his death. Unlike Balbo and Ciano he left behind him some positive achievements.

Wilhelmine warmongers

By F. L. Carsten

Geoff Eley:

Reshaping the German Night: Radical Nationalism and Political Change after Bismarck. 357pp. Yale University Press. £15. n 300 02386 3

Ever since Gerhard Ritter many years ago published his masterly, and very conservative, study of *Statecraft and the Profession of Arms*, the debate on continuity in German history has continued among the historians. In 1961 it received a new and vital impetus with the publication of Fritz Fischer's famous *Griff nach Deutschland*, which tried to establish a continuity between German war aims in the First and in the Second World Wars—and was immediately vehemently attacked by Ritter. Since then historians in many countries have joined the fray. Although Fischer's theses have found comparatively wide acceptance, and he has since fortified his argument by a second tome, *War of Illusions*, no consensus is likely to emerge. Meanwhile the debate has shifted from a discussion of German foreign policy to that of internal developments: to what extent did the unification of Germany through iron and blood, and Bismarck's policies after 1871 prepare the way for the failure of the Weimar Republic and the rise of Adolf Hitler? Was there, as Geoff Eley puts it, a "linear continuity between the Second and the Third Reichs"?

In Dr Eley's opinion, these and other "national associations" brought about a "fundamental radicalization of the right". They were anti-democratic and potentially anti-parliamentary, but also hostile to anti-socialist, but also hostile to the Catholic mass party, the Centre. They succeeded in bringing about a "novel mobilization of the subordinate classes and the working middle, not the working class. It is difficult to generalize, however, for some of these associations were more radical in their program and more hostile to the government and its policy than others. The *Navy League*, for example, was more pro-governmental in its attitude than some of the smaller associations; and the *Society for Germanic Abroad* was much less political in its aims than those mentioned so far. Some were more radical than others were not. What they had in common was a fervent nationalism, a firm conviction that German power must be preserved and strengthened. What we would like to know is to what extent German nationalism of that time was different from French nationalism, was more aggressive, more convinced of its own righteousness, more contemptuous of other

but in spite of strong efforts it did not neutralize the working classes. It failed to achieve its goal, the "unity of the nation" nor did it succeed in "winning back the embittered masses with the aid of the 'unvaluable' which was one of its primary aims. It remained a movement of the middle class."

The same applied even more strongly to the most pernicious of the "National Associations", the "Pan-German League", which engaged in vigorous propaganda for a more militant foreign policy and imperialist expansion. Officially it was not anti-semitic, but many of its leading members were, and it cooperated closely with anti-semitic organizations. It never had a mass membership and only possessed small funds, but among the members were many thousands of the next generation. To save Germany from liberalism, the Pan-German League leader class advocated the establishment of a dictatorship by the Emperor. As soon as the war came to an end the Pan-German League spawned an openly racist and anti-semitic *Volksrecht* league to fight the revolution and democracy.

Pernicious too was the "Society for the Eastern Marches" which aimed at Communism and succeeded in antagonizing the Polish population. The letcomer among the "National Associations" was the "Wohlfahrt", founded in 1911 by leaders of the Pan-German League in put pressure on the government in favour of a rapid expansion of the army. By 1914 it had almost 100,000 members, and was an actively militarist organization.

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Dr Eley's very detailed study of the new German Right as it came into being in the post-Bismarck period is an interesting and valuable contribution to this debate. He is in the best when certain classes which have become fashionable in Germany, and in particular when opposing the concept of "manipulation" by "the agrarian interest" or other powerful interest groups in Germany. He does not pull any punches: "later Nazi meanings may be misleadingly read back into the earlier and different discourse"; such teleological interpretations have tended to "submerge the specific qualities of Wilhelmine nationalism beneath a series of general assumptions about the longer-term formation of the German 'political culture'". "assumptions backed up by no empirical research". His plea is for a study of German nationalism, and the Wilhelmine period in general, as a phenomenon sui generis, without having constantly in mind what happened after 1933.

This plea is indeed very welcome, but somewhat difficult to follow in practice. I noticed with amusement that the last sentence of the publishers' blurb claims that the book is "an important contribution to the debate on the historical context of National Socialism"; they clearly have taken no heed of their author's plea.

Dr Eley's own research has concentrated on the various "National Associations" founded in Germany after 1890, either to promote a specific goal—naval armaments, the acquisition of more colonies—or German expansion, and military action in general. By far the largest of these was the *Volksrecht*, which had over 300,000 members organized in 3,000 branches with over 9,000 branch officers. Most of these were civil servants, teachers, or white-collar workers.

The true voice of Clio

By J. H. Plumb

MARY MORRIS:

George Macaulay Trevelyan A Memoir. 253pp. Harvill/Hamilton. £9.95. 0 241 10358 4

G. M. Trevelyan left instructions in his will that no biography of him should be written. This was a response to a deep strain of stoical melancholy that threaded his nature but it was not a very realistic gesture: his life was too full to be left to posterity. The pursuit of power, the pursuit of place, the pursuit of profit, these subjects brought to his mind, almost sadistic, gleam to his eye; but he was too clever to be satisfied with a shallow cynicism, he was aware of the ways in which men could console themselves for being either failures or merely losers. The victors and the defeated had need of ideas to clothe their nakedness but he could hardly allow that men might pursue ideas for their intrinsic value.

Both as a life and as a memoir it is a superbly unbalanced book, for the core of it deals with Trevelyan's service in Italy during the First World War—the material for this period of his life is quite rich so he was then a most active correspondent and his letters have been preserved. However, the period subsequent to the First World War—the years of Trevelyan's fame as Britain's leading historian—is dealt with very peremptorily; presumably because the material is less rich. Trevelyan did what he could in the biographer's life difficult by destroying most of his own records.

Nevertheless I am sure a great deal remains, some of it buried in the archives of the History Faculty in Cambridge and the archives at Trinity and at the National Trust. It is a pity that no real history project was based on him while the Fellows of Trinity who knew him as a young man were still alive. But when the time comes there will be enough. And much, of course, is revealed in Trevelyan's own works.

The biographer will, however, turn to this memoir. It is an act of piety, and the most attractive sides of Trevelyan's personality (and they were many) are shown to advantage—his deep concern for his country and his friends; his passionate loyalty; his unstinting work for the countryside; the love that he had for literature and history; his utter dedication to his talent.

During my lifetime as a historian I have met only two colleagues who impressed me as very great men—Trevelyan and Namier; as the years have passed, Trevelyan's greatness endures. Namier's greatness, Namier had a towering

personality, a capacity for concentration denied to the majority of even very clever men, a sharp analytical mind of great dialectical skill; but he was—and this has become increasingly apparent as the years have passed—locking in a sense of human realism.

Such a criticism would have hurt him deeply as he took pride in what he thought to be his knowledge of character, cutting through the humbug and laying bare the corruption and weaknesses of men in pursuit of power. The pursuit of power, the pursuit of place and profit, these subjects brought to his mind, almost sadistic, gleam to his eye; but he was too clever to be satisfied with a shallow cynicism, he was aware of the ways in which men could console themselves for being either failures or merely losers. The victors and the defeated had need of ideas to clothe their nakedness but he could hardly allow that men might pursue ideas for their intrinsic value.

Hence Namier was at his best with characters such as the Duke of Newcastle, Lord North or George III: at his worst with complex intellectuals such as Edmund Burke, and totally baffled by a John Wilkes, whom he could only see as a tedious exhibitionist. Namier could never have been moved by the thought of Garibaldi and the Thousand. Thus he could never grasp or give proper weight to the public politics of the 1760s or to the divisive efforts on British America's fight for independence.

And he had grave weaknesses as a historian—he never wrote a book. He lacked the capacity to construct a narrative; all of his work consisted—like that of J. H. Round whom he much resembled—of analytical essays. Nor was he gifted as a stylist. He was capable of an enigmatic, a terse and telling sentence; but paragraphs and chapters were beyond him. He quoted too much, and flogged his concepts nearly to death.

Trevelyan proved to be right in his judgment of Namier. Strangely around the dene at Hallsingh, Trevelyan wrote a letter to Namier in silence, he stopped and said "Namier" and repeatedly, "Namier" and then he came out with his opinion: "Great research worker; no historian." And Trevelyan was totally without envy. Indeed he had been responsible for promoting Namier's career at a most critical moment (Namier recognized this and told me proudly of his generous gesture in consequence—he had never reviewed any of Trevelyan's books). Trevelyan's judgment was

harsh yet just. Through Namier we know more about day-to-day actions in the House of Commons in the 1760s than anyone before his day would have thought it possible to know.

And yet there were immense limitations to Namier's work judged as research activity. When he decided to devote what remained of his professional life to the history of Parliament in George III's reign, it proved extremely difficult for Kieron Clark and myself to persuade him that he must write the history of the constituencies as well as the biographies of their members. And his reluctance on this issue can be seen from the poverty of many of the potted histories of constituencies in his book—all too frequently the newspapers, the pamphlets, the political ballads are ignored. The close of political attitudes outside the House of Commons is the most exciting aspect of the first decade of George III's reign; Namier rigidly excluded it from his interest. However, his work has stimulated a great debate, a debate which is going against rather than for Namier, because of his limitations.

Trevelyan was not very interested in Namier's type of work. He well realized its value. He was prepared, continuously, to use its results. Trevelyan wanted to do two things in writing history: to tell for his time the story of great events, and to reach through these events to human character—his humanity, his endurance, his follies and his weaknesses. He was searching for a poet for human truth in time and attempting to make us feel it. That is why he thought that history must always be a part of literature. The historian had in him empathy, a writer's empathy, as well as a scientist's love of fact.

Like most richly creative men, Trevelyan wrote purely in his work. *History of England* took him only just over two years. His output over a long and busy life (although interrupted for five years by the war during his most creative period) was very large. As indeed was Trevelyan's to Gibbon's bare him. Creative men usually write a lot, not a little. And it is with Macaulay and Gibbon that he has to be compared. He could write with a greater poetic beauty than either of them, yet never with so much of an imagination. Trevelyan wrote the most beautiful historical prose of any British historian; but there is a lack of intellectual bite.

He is now probably at the nadir of his reputation—some of his books, although far from all, have gone out of print although the



Three generations in 1910: George Otto Trevelyan, seated, with G. M. and Theo, whose death from appendicitis the following year was "the supreme sorrow" of G. M. Trevelyan's life.

major works are still available and still bought and still read. His revival will come when he is seen more strongly in the context of his age, and then, I suspect, he will loom over the twentieth century as Macaulay loomed over the early nineteenth. He has, alas, few rivals in history even before Trevelyan's day, was beginning to draw into and more men and women of high intelligence, and little creativity. They were concerned with problems on which fact collection was far more important than the latter's unrelenting. At the same time this social function of history has steadily weakened during this century. As history grew more academically professional it became more socially useless and ineffective—at

least in intellectual circles and in education, though not with the public at large, who still want history as literature, and still see it, as did Trevelyan, as one of the great creative activities of the mind. That is why the public in the Clarendon, Clarendon, and Macaulay will buy Trevelyan. Trevelyan's was a far lonelier voice than it need have been but it was the one true voice of Clio.

Not, I think, that Trevelyan's greatness was purely in his work. It lay also in his personal qualities. Absolute integrity and total honesty combined to make him one of the greatest men I have ever met. And that man is brought vividly alive in Mrs Moorman's highly personal memoir.

Marxism into Fascism

By Martin Blinkhorn

A. JAMES GREGOR:

Young Mussolini and the Intellectual Origins of Fascism. 271pp. University of California Press. £10. 0 520 03799 5

Italian Fascism and Developmental Dictatorship. 427pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £15.40. (Paperback, £5.45.) 0 691 05286 7

Since 1969 A. James Gregor has published a veritable canon of works dedicated to a revisionist view of Italian Fascism and its place in the twentieth century. In *The Ideology of Fascism* (1969) he sought to convince a largely sceptical readership that Italian Fascism possessed an ideology that deserved to be taken seriously and might best be categorized as "developmental". Five years later in *Fascism, Persuasion in Radical Politics and Interpretations of Fascism* he suggested that Italian Fascism represents the first deliberate attempt to solve the characteristic twentieth-century problem of "national backwardness, and in particular of delayed industrialization", through the device of "developmental, mass-mobilizing dictatorship".

In his two new books he delves further into what he considers two vital related aspects of Italian Fascism which also possess much wider implications: the theoretical and practical "developmentalism" and its intellectual origins in the early twentieth-century "crisis of classical Marxism". "Without Marxism, no Fascism" does not mean to Gregor what it will probably mean to most of those who open his *Young Mussolini* and the *Intellectual Origins of Fascism* without knowing his earlier work: Fascism, he announces with barely concealed excitement, was a "Marxist heresy" born of the Italian syndicalists' gradualist and completely unvision of a post-capitalist future devised only remotely from Marx; productivity, class harmony and national grandeur thus became not aspects of a necessary stage of development but rather ends in themselves.

Italian Fascism and Developmental Dictatorship: Gregor's attempt to demonstrate that under Fascism developmental theory was put into practice. The central case, namely that Fascist rule witnessed substantial

What surely is true is that by the time Fascism emerged as a discrete phenomenon the extension involved in it was not so much heretical as apostate. For while it may well have been their Marxism which led them to productivity through a desire to hasten the full flowering of capitalism in Italy, once having arrived there they abandoned completely any vision of a post-capitalist future devised only remotely from Marx; productivity, class harmony and national grandeur thus became not aspects of a necessary stage of development but rather ends in themselves.

Italian Fascism and Developmental Dictatorship: Gregor's attempt to demonstrate that under Fascism developmental theory was put into practice. The central case, namely that Fascist rule witnessed substantial

A Copper Amphora

On the hedge the thorns
of the prickly rose, your two
blue petticoat torn, anguish
deep in your gaudy coat of heart;
at Leutini, perhaps, near Ippolito's place
in the marshes, learned counsel on oaks
and leaves. What story does the earth
tell, the tribling of blackbirds
hidden in the noonday fanning
for fruit hard with violet
and ochre-coloured seeds. Your hair
tempestuous over your ears
that no longer hear.
A copper amphora at a doorway
glitters with drops of water
and red wisps of grass.

Salvatore Quasimodo

Translated by Jack Bayan

Happy hunting ground

By Ronald Blythe

DESMOND HAWKINS:

Cranborne Chase. 192pp. Gollancz. £7.95. 0 255 02768 1

In endless great and small matters the history of Cranborne Chase could be seen as a miniature of rural England at large. Strangely, since it offers a striking epitome of the 1920s, when the Forestry Commission and the Army between them obliterated a scene which had existed virtually unchanged since the Stone Age, and which, like Cranborne Chase, possessed its own mysterious dimension.

"Chase?" Simplifying what is gone into with satisfying thoroughness, the author's hunting ground whose owner's application of forest law was restricted. When the medieval Kings made gifts of parts of the royal forests to their subjects, they retained the ultimate legal prerogatives which governed them. There, in the emergent forest law and chase law, and, as much of Mr Hawkins's study points out, fine old litigious mass of leafy needles it all was, giving vent to claims and pretensions as to ownership, and when the law came to the aid of the woods.

Not that Cranborne itself was exactly a gift to sport with. Having

graphs is that it has always shown a total indifference to the boundary claims of Dorset, Hampshire and Wiltshire, and sprawls across all three at large. It is a place where neither the hunters nor the hunted can be halted by such line drawing, though both have to come to terms with the rivers in their path: the Stour and the Avon, and their tributary streams which define the limits of the Chase, not any single shire. There are numerous instances of these local and natural anomalies within the county framework. East Anglia's Brecklands was a perfect one until the 1920s, when the Forestry Commission and the Army between them obliterated a scene which had existed virtually unchanged since the Stone Age, and which, like Cranborne Chase, possessed its own mysterious dimension.

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got into the hands of the de Clare family, they "in some final and irrevocable way" managed to arrange an ownership which was to affect the way in which people lived and worked in this beautiful place for the next six centuries. Disafforested, legally speaking, the Chase acquired a twilight status, because its goings-on were too murky, to attract much outside interest. It is the scholarly and highly readable setting down of this defiant insularity which brings such interest now; this and the freshness of the venue on a map where little remains to explain.

Topographers apart, the uniqueness of the Chase had a genuine effect on the local literary intelligentsia. Hardy notes the ancient rhythm of this chalky plateau in *Tess*, and Rudson makes it the workaday landscape of his *A Shepherd's Life*. As it was also, as the story of the Chase, another and Browning's family, who can say to what non-porchal climates such a feudal holding might not reach out? That magnificent hymn-writer Sir William Keith ("All people that on earth do dwell"), a Chase priest, was certainly universal. Approaching the area from the south via Shaftesbury, writes Hawkins, is like stumbling on to a lost world: "Here the chalk scarp rears up steeply; a winding zigzag road, twisted round in the bone to reveal suddenly a broad plateau that undulates into the blue distance. . . . One can see the

Needles thirty miles away. And as night gathers . . . the eye ranges in an eagle's vision across the sandy heathlands of Hardy's Egdon to the twinkling lights of the coastal towns."

The Chase is ringed with towns. They are positioned regularly along its outer bounds like towers in a castle wall, Wilton, Salisbury, Ringwood, Blandford, Shaftesbury and Tisbury. Picked straight across it is Achnor, Pyke, which connects Badbury Rings with Old Sarum and Stonehenge. Tracks and roads of all times criss-cross its 250,000 acres, from the Ox Drove and the Vio Regalis to the walks which eventually split the hunting ground into the famous administrative of the Arundells, the Wardours, the Harbarts, the Ailesleys, the Frokes, and the Cecils. It was Robert Cecil who, securing "a large mixed bag of Crown properties in 1599", saw that he had got something quite special in Cranborne Chase, and win before he died had secured the lordship of the Chase, which had been held by the Crown without interruption ever since the distant days of Edward IV. The other of those Chase rulers who records the full treatment here, and justifiably so, is General Augustus Pitt-Rivers (Augustus Lane-Fox) the distinguished drachmologist, who while his Victorian neighbours were building stables, kennels, churches, houses etc. was creating his splendid anthropological museum. The General also told out an exquisite pleasure garden complete with opou-

air theatre and sports ground round an old wicket known as "The Larmer tree" which drew thousands. It was a far cry from the slaughter of buck, deer, fox, marten and roe, the traditional beasts of the chase. Hardy danced there in 1893.

The actual freeing of the Chase from its disfranchisement by Act of Parliament, took place in 1829. But long after this farmers, particularly, found themselves in trouble when trying to produce food on ground which was too far from the market to be profitable. The Chase was a place of the ultimate patrician recreation. Not the least aspect of this excellent and unusual local history is that in which it reveals the role of blood sports in influencing the values of the aristocracy. And it is something that the way of progress to know that Cranborne Chase is likely to be for more delightful now, with its pre-history on view and its little herds of deer (including two new species, stags and muntjacs) occasionally culled but never pursued in the Rufous dog when it was all "monotonous and undifferentiated woodland". Better for the woodwards and cotters too. Finally it must be said that the author has a kind of genius for discovering the heartbeats and drama of property rights, and how important it was to the Chase, for these have meant much to the men who have ruled the Chase than anything including, as suspects, hunting itself.

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